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Impact of the AH1N1 Flu in Panama

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the News

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

The AH1N1 Flu outbreak hasn't impacted the imports of pork or other food products in Panama.

General Information:

As of June 4, 2009 the AH1N1 Flu outbreak hasn't impacted the imports of pork or other food products in Panama.

According to the latest report from the Pan-American Health Organization (OPS) of June 3, 2009, A/H1N1 Flu has affected 19,389 people in 23 countries in America and has produced 125 deaths. In the Americas there was an increase of 1,097 cases regarding the previous day. Globally, 66 countries have confirmed cases.

In Panama, until June 4, 2009, there are 179 confirmed cases. Of these, 91 are males and 88 females. According to age, 112 cases (62%) are younger than 15 years and 45 (25%) between 20 and 49 years. In the group of 15 to 19 years there have been 17 cases and in those of 50 years and over five (5) cases.

According to the geographic location of the 107 cases confirmed to belong Panama City, 38 cases confirmed of San Miguelito, 8 cases have been filed in Panama West, 23 cases in the province of Colon, 1 case in the district of Penonome (province of Cocle) and 1 case in the district of David (province of Chiriqui). One (1) case was imported from New York, U.S.A.

Of the 179 confirmed cases, 128 patients (77%) have been released, and all have been incorporated into their daily lives. No confirmed cases are hospitalized. 312 cases were discarded as AH1N1 Flu test was negative.

Panama has the “Gorgas Central Reference Laboratory in Public Health” which is the laboratory in the Central America Region that has the test kits for analyzing the AH1N1 Flu, given by the World Health Organization (WHO)

The behavior of the A H1N1 Flu in Panama, is still present with a mild clinical development.

After evaluating the epidemiological behavior of the A H1N1 Flu, the Ministry of Health of Panama maintains a hygiene campaign to raise awareness about the importance of frequent hand washing with soap and water, and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

The Ministry of Health of Panama also reminded people with influenza, that they should remain in their homes and rest, regularly following medical advice. Parents whose children experience respiratory symptoms are instructed not to send their children to school for at least a week. (1)

The Panamanian Food Safety Authority (AUPSA, in Spanish) and the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Panama (MIDA, in Spanish) hasn't issued any type of import restrictions related to the A H1N1 Flu. Below is an unofficial translation of the AUPSA's Press Release, for your additional information.

The AUPSA statement is based on the OIE statement, that the A H1N1 Flu is not transmitted by pork.

(1) Source: Ministry of Health of Panama: www.minsa.gob.pa

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PRESS RELEASE:

Panamanian Food Safety Authority unofficial translation Statement:

Source: www.aupsa.gob.pa

“PANAMA DOES NOT IMPORT PORK FROM MEXICO

Monday, April 27, 2009

Following the declaration of a public health emergency, raising international concerns, decreed by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the A H1N1 influenza, the Panamanian Food Safety Authority-(AUPSA)-informed Panamanian citizens that Panama does not import any pork products from Mexico.

The leading representatives of the AUPSA, led by General Administrator, Humberto Bermudez, stated that “we continue assessing the situation considering it more prudent to remind the public that the viral strain, called H1N1 of swine influenza is not spread by eating food, as stated by the World Organization for Animal Health, known by the French acronym OIE.

However, it is worth noting that disease transmission occurs from person to person or live animal to person and vice versa.

This continues to be of concern for the world, a situation which motivates AUPSA to remain vigilant about the behavior of the disease”.

In Panama, the authorities have echoed these concerns and AUPSA maintains its basic recommendations which are to avoid public congestion, cover your mouth and nose when coughing, or sneezing, wash your hands frequently with soap and water, as well as go to the nearest health facility when experiencing symptoms ranging from headache, fever, vomiting or diarrhea.”

A/H1N1 influenza like human illness in Mexico and the USA:

OIE statement

Source: www.oie.int

Paris, April 27 - 2009 – “A virus circulating in Mexico and the USA and involving person to person transmission appears to cause in some cases severe disease in certain people infected by this virus. There is no evidence that this virus is transmitted by food.

It is not a classical human influenza virus called seasonal influenza, which causes every year millions of human cases of influenza worldwide but a virus which includes in its characteristics swine, avian and human virus components.

Any current information in influenza like animal disease in Mexico or the USA could support a link between human cases and possible animal cases including swine. The virus has not been isolated in animals to date. Therefore, it is not justified to name this disease swine influenza. In the past, many human influenza epidemics with animal origin have been named using their geographic name, eg Spanish influenza or Asiatic influenza, thus it would be logical to call this disease “North-American influenza”.

Urgent scientific research must be started in order to know the susceptibility of animals to this new virus, and if relevant to implement biosecurity measures including possible vaccination to protect

susceptible animals. If this virus would be shown to cause disease in animals, virus circulation could worsen the regional and global situation for public health.

Currently, only findings related to the circulation of this virus in pigs in zones of countries having human cases would justify trade measures on the importation of pigs from these countries. The OIE will continue its alert function and will publish in relation with its Members, Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres all appropriate information in real time.

OIE and FAO underline the great value of the influenza veterinary laboratory network called OFFLU, in charge of the surveillance of the evolution of influenza viruses in animals. There is a strong need to reinforce this network whose members are urged to put immediately in the public domain any genetic sequence of influenza virus they obtain.

This influenza event underlines in all countries the crucial importance of maintaining worldwide veterinary services able to implement in animals early detection of relevant emerging pathogens with a potential public health impact. This capacity is fully linked with veterinary services good governance and their compliance with OIE international standards of quality.”

FAO statement:

Source: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/13002/icode/>

Rome, April 27, 2009 – “...At present, transmission seems to be occurring solely from humans to humans; so far evidence that the new strain of influenza A virus has entered the human population directly from pigs has not been established. Further analysis is planned to gain better insight into the situation.

“There is no evidence of a threat to the food chain; at this stage it is a human crisis and not an animal crisis, but we have to be alerted and prepared,” said FAO Chief Veterinary Officer Joseph Domenech...”